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STATINTL

Trying to Flank Anderson Papers, the White House Turns on 'Leaks'



WASHINGTON—In trying to counter the Anderson papers, which raise so many questions about the administration's mishandling of the Indian-Pakistani crisis, the White House has now resorted to "leaking" against its own State Department. It's an unseemly performance.

The chosen instruments for the counterarguments are veteran cold-warrior journalists known to be as pro-Viet Nam and pro-Pakistan as the White House itself. So it is now confidentially being reported on "highest authority" that if there was any U. S. bungling over the recent war it was the fault not of the White House but the State Department.

The chief alibi getting White House undercover promotion is that last spring the President assigned responsibility for the South Asian problem to Secretary of State William Rogers and his aides, but the diplomats failed Nixon by underestimating the situation and letting it get out of hand. Thus the President supposedly was forced to step in at the last minute and take over the crisis, but then it was "much too late in the day."

Impeccable Reporting

Actually, as we know from the secret cables revealed by columnist Jack Anderson, the diplomatic reporting on the Indian-Pakistani conflict was impeccable. For months the messages from the U. S. ambassador in New Delhi, Kenneth Keating, could hardly have assessed the situation better if he had had a crystal ball. He not only foresaw the outcome but had the courage to warn against Nixon's pro-Pakistani policy.

The Keating cables, of course, were available to the President and Henry Kissinger, his chief foreign policy adviser, as well as to the secretary of state. They were ignored not because they were brushed off by the State Department, but because they went against the Nixon-Kissinger line.

The minutes of several top secret White House strategy meetings on the Indian-Pakistani war, also disclosed by Anderson, clearly show that the President and Kissinger were aware that the State Department, disturbed over orders to support Pakistan, was passively resisting this policy.

It was not State Department bungling that triggered the White House intervention. It is plain to see that Nixon and Kissinger stepped in and took over the war strategy because they rightly suspected that State had no enthusiasm for a policy that finally turned out so disastrously for the United States.

The White House's pet apologists are also now stating on "positive authority" that the United States had "conclusive proof" of India's intention to attack and crush West Pakistan as soon as it won in East Pakistan, or Bangla Desh as it is now called. Nixon we are told, saved West Pakistan by bringing pressure on Prime Minister Indira Gandhi thru the Kremlin. Mrs. Gandhi is pictured as backing off on orders from Moscow.

It would be interesting to know what that "conclusive proof" consists of. Nixon himself doesn't seem to have any hard evidence to support this story. In an interview with Time magazine earlier this month, the President said that the "Russians deserve credit for restraint after East Pakistan went down, to get the cease-fire that stopped what would inevitably have been the conquest of West Pakistan as well."

Later, when asked to document this, he admitted that he was mostly guessing. "I wouldn't like to contend that the Indians had a deliberate plan to do that," he said, "but once the passions of war and success in war are set loose, they tend to run their course."

Trying to guess what national leaders will do in a crisis is risky business. Secret U. S. position papers led the Communists to believe Truman wouldn't defend Korea, but he did. The world could not have been more sur-

prised when Nixon decided to go to Peking. The President may think the CIA can read Mrs. Gandhi's mind, but so far it has missed by a mile.

A. Private Belief

Nixon seems to have convinced himself [or at least his apologists] that Mrs. Gandhi is under the thumb of Moscow, a notion that is not shared by any other leader in the world, including the men in the Kremlin. Nor is it even shared by the President's chief adviser, Kissinger.

At the now-famous White House meeting on last Dec. 8, at which strategy on India and Pakistan was threshed out, Kissinger secretly warned his colleagues about Mrs. Gandhi. He said: "The lady" is cold-blooded and tough, and will not turn into a Soviet satellite merely because of pique" at the United States. He ought to pass that on to the President, too.

The whole history of India, regardless of its changing leadership, has been distinguished by a marked and consistent determination to go its own way. In the wake of its recent great victory, it is likely that it will be more independent than ever. Maybe the President should turn back our relations with India to the State Department and start paying attention to the advice of Ambassador Keating.